

troops and to join a league for the liberation of Italy from Spanish domination. Neither the emissary from the league, which the Duke of Milan forged with Venice, the Vatican, and France, nor Pescara's wife, the poet Victoria Colonna who is enthusiastic about Italy, are able to win the supreme commander over for their political objective, for the fight against tyranny, and for the independence of the Italian states (among which the kingdom of Naples was to be awarded to Pescara), an undertaking that would presuppose Pescara's betrayal of his worldly lord. "Italy talks in vain, it wastes its energy," Pescara replies to Victoria's patriotic appeal. "I have long known the temptation, I saw it coming and peak like an oncoming wave, and did not waver, not for a moment, not with the slightest thought. For I was not confronted with any choice, I did not belong to myself, I stood outside of things." And he adds the reason why he does not allow political considerations to touch him, what keeps him from at all pondering a decision that bears on his own good, why he keeps to the path he had once set out on, the moral stance that he has adopted, with unconditional resoluteness: "My divinity has quieted the storm all around my oars."¹¹

Meyer is mentioned by Strauss once more. The name occurs again in a letter to Seth Benardete from January 1965, specifically in the context of a brief discussion of the question *ti esti theos*: "If one starts from the experience, one finds the Presence or the Call – the Wholly Other which is both terrible and gracious-graceful – one might say that wholly other is death (cf. C. F. Meyer, *Die Versuchung des Pescara*) or nothingness – but *experienced* not as such but as a being, preferably as a human being or rather as ἀνθρωποειδής. 'Timor fecit deos': fear belongs to the irascible – θυμός (≠ ἐπιθυμία) necessarily 'personifies.' Yet one must add immediately: Amor (ἔρως τοῦ καλοῦ) fecit deos – a love which is not satisfied (rightly) with any actual καλόν because of its essential caducity."¹² In light of the double answer that Strauss outlines in a few strokes, one can say that the repeated reference to Heidegger/Meyer aims at an elementary experience to which each of the authors gives apt expression in his own way. The longing for security and justice on the one hand, for the beautiful on the other, makes the gods. In his genealogical reconstruction from 1947, Strauss had taken into account

11 Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, *Die Versuchung des Pescara. Novelle* (Leipzig: Haessel, 1887), 110, 122, 127, 163, 167, 169, 176, 182, 184 (towards the end of the third chapter, fourth chapter, and first half of fifth chapter).

12 Letter to Seth Benardete from January 22, 1965, in my possession.